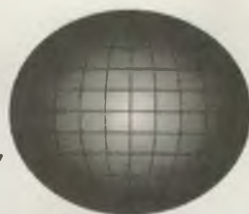


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Spotlight on Revolutionary Democracy

New Paradigms for Old?

At long last, after all these decades, some *other* emancipated workers have come along to give the World Socialist Movement a run for its money (if you will excuse the expression) in contending for the "Impossible" title. They are not socialists, and they would indignantly reject any attempt to label them that. More interestingly, they are anti-Marxist. They call themselves New Democracy, and their manifesto is a book, *We CAN Change the World*, by David G. Stratman, a survivor of the 60s and a one-time member of the Progressive Labor Party. The book has a deceptively rhetorical-sounding title: it applies literally to changing the world as a whole, not to its partial or eventual modification. Its central thesis is that ordinary (working) people are constantly engaged in a struggle to humanize their lives. (Its subtitle is *The Real Meaning of Everyday Life*.)

Most of what follows is a critique of the ideas in this book. Stratman has set out to make himself the *bête noire* of those Marxists who consider themselves "orthodox." He sees the spurious "socialism" of the left — particularly the Leninist left — as driven by a defective paradigm. Marx above all, he argues, gave the left (whom socialists have always exposed as merely out to reform capitalism) a pernicious theory of revolution that defeated its own purpose, agreeing as it did with capitalism's view of people. Though it may have been useful as far as it went, giving rise to Lenin's "professionalized" vanguard that detached itself from the class it was to guide into emancipation, Marx's paradigm remained mired in capitalist assumptions. Ultimately, to Marx, the working class was



an empty abstraction, a passive object; Lenin could energize his "science of revolution" but could not manage to overcome capitalism using capitalist values.

Stratman seeks to address what he perceives as the crisis of Marxism by radically reversing Lenin's (and, he thinks, Marx's) assumptions: ordinary working people are day in and day out engaged in a revolutionary struggle against capitalism, but they face the accumulated power of control aimed at them by the capitalist elite, which works incessantly to isolate workers and defeat their attempts to shape their lives (based on

a fundamental, inbuilt urge to solidarity and equality), keeping them imprisoned in its view of people, a deadening theology of egotism and competition.

What the author takes for Marxism, unfortunately, is only the stale and turgid corruption of Marxian terminology passed on to us by the Social Democrats of Europe (including Russia) and the Bolsheviks or "Communists" who succeeded them. He also thinks Marxism is a "science of revolution," and he identifies this science with the terms *socialism* and *communism*. His notion of what would constitute a paradigm is contextually flawed; the paradigm change is itself the revolution abolishing class rule. Stopping with simply advancing a candidate for new paradigm sidesteps the real issue, which is focusing the consciousness of the working majority on the need to abolish its condition of slavery.

Given the interest and complexity of his thesis, the critique will be serialized in three parts. The bulk of this issue (number 14) will be devoted to that critique, and part of numbers 15 and 16 as well. Ø

THIS ISSUE: Consciousness vs. Revolution • Musings • Mr. Marx & Dr. Lenin • Letters • What's in a Revolution?



Consciousness vs. Revolution

Socialism means the establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole. It is not state or public ownership or trusteeship. It does not imply nationalization: in fact, it eventually implies the complete disappearance of national boundaries.

What Stratman describes as "socialism" or Social Democracy is on the other hand a carbon copy of *one* definition of reformism, which, embodied in a group of organizations, amounts to so many "sophisticated instruments of capitalist rule" (p. 2). It "focuses too narrowly on economic arrangements," he says — that is, it advocates and implements what the Social Democrats called a program of "immediate demands" (reforms, which of course mostly relate to the transactional aspects of wage-slavery) and only has the effect of reducing human beings to cogs in the capitalist machine; it is naturally "inadequate" (p. 1). However, proceeding empirically and taking his definitions from what he observes happening in the world around him (or alternatively, from the political milieu he was familiar with), he gives to all these reformist initiatives the name so many have used — "socialism" — as though it were a matter of common knowledge (see below).

In this context he defines "socialism" and "communism" as the policy of Marxists and makes Marxism the driving concept that explains the behavior of Social Democrats and "Communists." His misunderstandings of Marxism are many and complex, and I will try to deal with them as they arise. In spite of this, he manages to articulate a very creditable general approximation to the socialist position:

Transforming human relations will include destroying the capitalist and Communist states and all their apparatus — the military, the police, the courts, the legislative and executive bodies. It will include the active suppression of counterrevolution by armed working people. It will mean the mobilization and participation of people, under conditions of equality, in the investigation and debate of all questions of importance to the life of the people. It will mean the creation by ordinary people of appropriate bodies for democratic planning and coordination, consistent with their values and goals.

Transforming human relations will also include destroying capitalist and Communist economic relations and creating new economic relations in their place. All the means of production will be appropriated and managed by the workers themselves. It will mean, on the initiative of working people, the creation of workers' councils at every level to oversee the democratic transformation of the relations, goals and structure of work and production. It will mean producing for use, not for profit, those products identified as needed. (p. 149)

His reference to "armed working people suppressing counterrevolution" invokes a debate that has periodically surfaced in the World Socialist Movement. His spirit of "learning from the people" is very salutary and certainly does separate his views from those of the Left; on the other hand, feeding pre-digested ideas to people under the guise of "learning from them" could easily happen if people were not actively disposed to reorganize the basis of society along revolutionary-democratic lines. This is the same problem besetting any movement calling itself revolutionary — lack of an immediate drive on the part of working people to reorganize the world of work and the world work makes pushes organizations into the endless feedback loop of sectarian posturing, which further isolates them and intensifies their sectarianism.

Stratman has discovered on his own what (world) socialists have been saying for many decades: leaders are the curse of the working class. But he also invokes the social usage that confers the prestige-word "leadership" on the routine notion of "taking the initiative." He refers to it as "enabling other people to act ... helping to clarify thinking, to create self-confidence, to create supportive relationships" (p. 269). Where he speaks of "a different kind of leadership," socialists reject the phrase along with the idea. The World Socialist Movement's tradition of open public debate serves as a defense against any sectarianizing tendency (without sacrificing principle). We are an entirely collegial movement operating along horizontal, even lateral, lines of decision-making. This proscription of hierarchy provides a common ground where all can meet as equals; the organization does not presume to hand down "correct" analyses to the general public — it merely advocates a point of view that, if it really does articulate what people need, they will presumably adopt.

Once on ground where history and methodology intersect, however, the semblance of convergence collapses, as Stratman proceeds to elaborate a very original critique of the materialist conception of history based on his interpretation of Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. His methodological reworking of basic concepts leads him into assertions and analyses that both reflect his aim of overturning conventional political wisdom and thoroughly misconstrue fundamental advances made by Marx and Engels. He sports a "new paradigm" he is sure will provide an abundance of puzzle-solving theorems that can collectively topple Marx's mistaken "science of revolution" (pp. 167, 168). Leftists swearing by the tried-and-true verities of Social Democracy or Bolshevism, or some watered-down reincarnation of them, will find their reasoning effectively neutralized, since Stratman does in fact turn these misconstructions on their interpreters. The problem is that he originally got his understanding of Marxism from that sector, and his critique is directed at it. World socialists have always rejected these misconstructions.

All question of "new paradigms" aside, however, his emphasis on social control as the motor force of capitalism sacrifices capitalism's economic aspects to a preoccupation with "Marx's view of people" — and with it any ability to refer to an outside standard as a reality check. This results in some very fuzzy history, as we will see from the following account of the Factory Committees (Soviets) that handed the October Revolution over to the Bolsheviks in 1917. "The Factory Committees had to be suppressed," he asserts, "because they would have made rule by the Bolshevik elite unnecessary." Furthermore,

if workers succeeded in maintaining their ownership of the factories they had seized, if they ran these factories for themselves, if they considered the revolution to be at an end, if they considered socialism to have been established — then there would have been no need for the revolutionary leadership of the Bolsheviks [Frederick Kaplan, *Bolshevik Ideology*, quoting an unknown writer]. (p. 146)

Considering the impossibility, in retrospect, of maintaining worker ownership or of converting de facto possession into formal, democratically administered ownership, this is not true, and for two reasons: One, no widespread movement enjoying majority support existed in most of the world where capitalism had established itself; and second, it is extremely unlikely the Factory Committees would have survived a confrontation with either the peasant majority in Russia (who wanted land, not capitalist industry) or the European capitalist powers outside it, who would see in the abating of the bourgeois republic only an opportunity to install a régime favorable

to investment on their terms. Rule by some élite, in other words, was under the circumstances inevitable, and the Factory Committee mode of organizing society was, like the Paris Commune before it, an important but ephemeral interlude with illuminating hints of what was possible (and necessary).

But, in the historical context, could workers have "maintained their ownership of the factories"? Socialism in one country is pure invention. The new society would have no way of defending itself against the economic and political opportunism of surrounding capitalist society, which has shed abundant examples of how it sees "primitive" people *vis-à-vis* existing market conditions.

Even supposing for the sake of argument that a worker-controlled economy (based, of course, on production for use and run democratically) could fend off the retrograde invasions that would probably follow, people would have

to consume all their time and energy defending what they had won: the point of achieving a revolution would be largely nullified, and instability would create pressures to retreat to a more tenable position. The only viable supposition is one on which workers in not just

one but many parts of the capitalist world eliminate more or less simultaneously the condition that keeps them enslaved: employment linked to the use of capital.

If the Bolsheviks had not furnished the Factory Committees a window of opportunity, would the latter have been able to do more than take possession of their workplaces? And would that have been sufficient to underwrite the success of the revolution? For a revolution to succeed simply because the revolutionists "considered the revolution to be at an end" overlooks the revolutionary as well as the conservative importance of relations of production. Unless those relations are formally consolidated in some way, the revolution remains at risk, for the tendency will always be for people to fall back in doubtful cases on expedients they learned under capitalism; because every practical decision carries with it some theoretical inertia, enough regressive low-level decision-making would eventually reopen the whole revolution to question. I am not suggesting this would in itself cause a reversion to capitalism, only that revolution is as much a product of what people understand as of what they do.

While related problems with defining the concepts of revolution and consciousness constantly reappear in the author's studies of specific historical developments, these problems are a function of his critique of Marx, and of his pretension of replacing a "Marxist paradigm" with one of his own, rather than of any inherent flaws in his general

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conception. This comes out if we examine his explanation of his own expression, "revolutionary democracy":

Throughout this book I use the term "revolutionary democracy" to describe the society I believe we should aim to create. ... "Socialism" focuses too narrowly on economic arrangements to be an adequate term, and in practice has meant little more than planned capitalism. "Democratic socialism" and "social democracy" are terms for welfare capitalism, social democratic parties are simply sophisticated instruments of capitalist rule. "Democracy," to the extent that it means "rule by the people," is the essential element in meaningful social change but does not by itself convey that, to be democratic, a movement must be revolutionary. Thus "revolutionary democracy" ... What we mean by "revolution" then depends largely on our view of people. Democratic revolution and truly democratic society can only be based on a view of ordinary people as fit to rule society. (pp. 1, 2)

Functionally, in fact, revolutionary democracy closely matches the (world) socialist notion of real democracy:

... two values ... are fundamental to most people's lives and ... are critical to creating a new society. Most people believe in equality and in commitment to each other. Revolutionary democracy means changing all the relationships and institutions in society to reflect the values of solidarity and equality ... Precisely because it is based on ordinary people as the makers of history, a revolutionary democratic movement must openly challenge capitalist goals, values, plans, policies and power with its own revolutionary vision (pp. 3, 5).

Much the same applies to his treatment of the concept of revolution: "Revolutionary consciousness," he states, "consists of workers' consciousness of themselves as the collective source of value in society and the source of revolution" (p. 271).

To Lenin's point, that the working class left to itself is not capable of developing revolutionary consciousness, we reply: Yes, it is capable. But the working class is not left to itself; it is under constant attack by capitalist and Communist culture. The revolutionary consciousness which workers develop spontaneously from the interaction of their values with their experience is constantly quashed before it can be further developed, consolidated, expanded and spread; it is smothered before people can become conscious of its significance.

His prejudice against the economic dimension, however, amputates the objective, historical occurrence of

revolutions, leaving him with consciousness, abstractly defined and independent of historical benchmarks, as the arbiter of revolution. As a result, he frequently thinks he is describing revolutions when all he does is outline a tendency in that direction, one almost always expressing itself as a movement to improve capitalist society. Thus, he believes,

the Russian Revolution of October 1917 marked the first time in history that a revolution of the working class — of workers in their factories and peasants in their fields, soldiers at the front and sailors in their fleets — succeeded. The régime of the Czar had collapsed before the aroused populace in February; it was replaced by a reform government of industrialists, big landowners and liberal aristocrats, led by Alexander Kerensky. (p.142)

His prejudice against the economic dimension, however, amputates the objective, historical occurrence of revolutions, leaving him with consciousness, abstractly defined and independent of historical benchmarks, as the arbiter of revolution.

Granted he means the "success" of the workers and peasants in overthrowing the Tsar's government in February was crowned only in October, this is still well off the mark. What kind of success was it that tore control of the revolution out of their hands by transferring the government first to the capitalist sharks and then to a régime that "proved to be another form of elite control"? And if we are going to be full of admiration for the workers in their soviets, were they making a revolution to abolish the wages system? If Stratman wants us to conclude that such an objective was not really what they were making a revolution for (since this would have played into the hands of the masters by transferring to "external"

sources their inspiration and motivation, denying their aspiration to equality and solidarity), on what grounds should we consider the workers revolutionary?

Moreover, since Stratman knows that Lenin thought workers capable of nothing beyond "trade-union consciousness" when left to act on their own, he must also know that Lenin considered party democracy in the Social-Democrat-led fight to overthrow the Tsar "a dangerous and useless toy." Lenin expressed both opinions in his pamphlet, *What is to be done?* A party sanctioning views like these is incapable of championing a democratic revolution as Stratman himself defines it; but more importantly from a socialist perspective, the revolution unlucky enough to depend on such champions is either doomed or imaginary, depending on who is proposing it.

At the general level, again, Stratman's views on consciousness correspond to the world socialist viewpoint on revolution as the conscious and deliberate achievement of society's working majority in emancipating itself from the yoke of the employment servitude imposed by capital. He writes:

In revolutionary democracy, political consciousness is not technical knowledge of the system, but a way of thinking about and relating to other people. Political consciousness is value-laden and value-based: it expresses and reflects human relationships based on solidarity and equality. The fundamental ideas of revolutionary democracy and the relationships in which these ideas are embedded and expressed are deeply intertwined in the life of the working class. They consist of an understanding of people and society inseparable from certain shared goals for human society, certain shared beliefs in what society should be like. They cannot be the products of economic "experts" or the property of a political party separate from the working class. Political consciousness is the organic product of people working together to create the bases of human life, who then reflect upon the meaning of their actions.

When he says, however, that "the problem is that the working class does not know what it knows," he sounds at first as if he is approximating the Marxian concept of fetishism, as Marx

developed it in *The German Ideology* and, later, *Capital*:

The knowledge, insights and consciousness among people is broken into many pieces; everyone has at least a bit of the whole truth, but the bits and pieces of collective knowledge have not been brought together into a critical mass, a whole vision to transform the world. People remain unsure of what they know, because what they know contradicts everything that they have been taught. Because they are not together to confirm the validity of what they each know and to assemble it into a whole, the earth-shaking, world-creating significance of their knowledge is hidden from view. (p. 272)

But the conceit that this represents the insight of a new paradigm drives him instead through one needless detour after another. I will examine the case of the Diggers, who materialized during the course of the English Revolution of the 17th Century with "a Declaration to the Powers of England, and to all the Powers of the World," written by Gerard Winstanley, to denounce the idea "That one branch of mankind should rule over another" ("The True Levellers Standard Advanced"). They originated within the Leveller opposition to the increasingly unequal distribution of land in England dating from the Norman Conquest (1066); the Levellers took the occasion of Cromwell's rise to power to strike a blow for the reversal of this trend.

The Levellers were the forerunner of today's Left, confronting the emerging Whig squirearchy, landowners "of the middling sort" practicing an economic discipline akin to that of the Puritans in religion. This newer gentry in turn characteristically opposed a crown policy catering to the old pre-commercial landed aristocracy ("the Free-holders or Landlords") and contested the latter's control of the state. The Diggers, who called themselves the "True Levellers," sent their manifesto to the army's General Council to justify their nonviolent efforts at opening the common lands to farming by ordinary people and in particular their

project of digging up "Georges-Hill and the waste Ground thereabouts, and to sow Corn, and to eat bread together by the sweat of our brows."

What made them dangerous was their demand to end the accelerating practice of enclosure (consolidation of land holdings) and, in the name of egalitarianism, keeping the common lands open to all persons regardless of their rank in society ("looking upon each other, as equals in the Creation" having the right to "live as Comfortably as the Landlords that live in their Inclosures"). Winstanley's document refers numerous times to this as "making the Earth a Common Treasury."

But rather than simply accept Stratman's statement that the Diggers "had already perceived much of [capitalism's] content," we might ask who the "capitalists" were.

Stratman, to illustrate his new paradigm, attempts to reverse the relation between increasing inequality resulting from the gathering onslaught of land monopolization and the action of the Diggers at a moment when the enclosers were maneuvering to capture Parliament, i.e., making a revolution. He is right to say that the Diggers were revolutionaries and that they spoke for the best instincts of humanity, saying what people everywhere would say if only they could manage to put all the pieces together and articulate it. But his new paradigm requires him to encumber himself with all sorts of anti-Marxist paraphernalia — chief among which is an absurd theory that consciousness historically "precedes" revolutions:

According to the Marxist view of history, mass rejection of capitalist values and relations could not have developed until a full-blown industrial economy had produced a proletariat which had experienced capitalist exploitation and been driven, on the basis of opposing interests, to oppose it. But the Diggers under-

stood the nature of capitalist relations before these relations had produced any substantial economic effects. The vision and the consciousness of the Diggers do not seem to have been the less real for not yet having experienced the still-developing forms of capitalist exploitation, they had already perceived much of its content — enough, that is, to reject it as a form of social organization or a set of values fit for human beings. (p. 247)

He bases this exposition on Christopher Hill's account of the Diggers, *The World Turned Upside Down*. But rather than simply accept Stratman's statement that the Diggers "had already perceived much of [capitalism's] content," we might ask who the "capitalists" were. The same Christopher Hill, in another essay, *The English Revolution, 1640*, writes that

the northern and western parts of England remained relatively untouched by the new commercial spirit radiating from London and the ports; but in the south and east many landowners were beginning to exploit their estates in a new way ... Now, with the development of the capitalist mode of production within the structure of feudalism, many landowners began either to market that portion of the produce of their estates which was not consumed by their families, or to lease their lands to a farmer who could produce for the market. So landowners came to regard their estates in a new light: as a source of money profit, of profits that were elastic and could be increased. (TER, pp. 15, 16)

They were predominantly rising gentleman farmers, eventually Whigs in their politics, who had seen a chance to become wealthy and powerful by stealing their neighbors' lands. The enormous unhoused and wandering population of England in the 17th century forms a stark backdrop to the political struggles that the moneyed classes were conducting among themselves — to see who would get to walk off with the right to exploit the poor. Hill continues:

A new kind of farmer was thus emerging in the Home Counties — the capitalist farmer. He might be a pirate or a slave-trader, a respectable City merchant who had done well in currants or a country clothing capitalist, in any case he was looking for a safe investment for his profits, and one that would at the same time give him social standing ... But the new farmer might be a feudal lord drawn by the pull of a near-by market and able to raise capital to reorganise the management of his estates; or he might be a lessee from the richer stratum of the peasantry. (TER, p. 17)

The poor knew what the problem was, and the Diggers banded together to raise the "forbidden" issue. Stratman, with his focus on social control, correctly perceives this, but his thesis that it presents a problem for "the Marxist view of history" is mistaken.

Marxism, first of all, does not come equipped with a "view of history." This is something Stratman either made up or got from his exposure to the Leninist belief system. It complements his tendency to ascribe to capitalism a "model" which he thinks bears equating with this complex, amorphous entity he calls "Marxism." Individual Marxists all have their own views on the subject of history — Marx included. *Marxism* is only a methodology used to analyze human society. The new paradigm takes umbrage at what it considers Marx's condescending attitude toward the "little people."

Common ownership (socialism), as a system of society replacing the capitalist system of society, requires a global scale on which to occur. If the Diggers were "ordinary working people," they had *already become* a working class; they could then and there, had conditions permitted, have established a system of common ownership anywhere. But does the perception of a few individuals caught up in an engulfing (bourgeois) revolution against human nature suffice to accomplish a revolution for it? A revolution *for* a human world being a revolution *against* capital, workers everywhere else — wherever capitalism posed people the same dilemma of poverty or starvation — would have to have been present and ready to do the same, and in sufficiently large numbers to turn their views into "working in a new world" (in Kuhn's phrase).

Could the Diggers have prevailed, then? The very fact that they could not succeed in communicating their program to the disparate populations inhabiting the British Isles (Ireland had only recently come under the English yoke) is why Marx and Engels concluded such a program was premature: too many obstacles existed to everyone getting, let alone

many, had a century earlier followed Thomas Münzer and the Anabaptists into a collision with the established order? Would Cromwell (who spoke very succinctly for the new gentry class) have found it in himself to just step out of the way and let human reason once again take over in the world? Whether or not the Diggers had ever heard of the peasant war in Germany, how would they have managed to talk the rest of the known and unknown world into reorganizing the variety of exploitative social orders that then existed (capitalism was only the newest), so that ordinary people could run society as their human intelligence dictated?

Instead of considering these important logistical questions (which, far from being technical in character, form part of the scaffolding of basic human intelligence, just as people's thoughts form part of material conditions), Stratman has concentrated on the factor of technological change and arbitrarily assigned that to the "Marxist model" as its "view of history." He himself certainly understands the disparity between what is needed and what is currently feasible, as he demonstrates in the chapter on his tangle with the Boston school system. To the extent that existing conditions stand in the way of something's *realization*, we can legitimately describe the corresponding program of change as "utopian," since — until conditions actually do favor its implementation — it remains a reality only in potential form, and even then only to the extent that individuals actually articulate it.

"Utopian" socialism, as a movement, was only an intuitive, premature version of scientific socialism. Implying that Marx and Engels equated "utopian" with logically or historically impossible, Stratman goes on to infer that they used the term to refer solely to economic conditions. The emerging English gentry of this period proved to be a pool of economically (and often religiously and politi-

To the extent that existing conditions stand in the way of something's realization, we can legitimately describe the corresponding program of change as "utopian," since until conditions actually do favor its implementation, it remains a reality only in potential form.

Marx and Engels had been aware, of course, if not of the extent and depth, at least of the existence of the Leveller movement which Hill describes. They referred to such movements as "utopian," because, at the time of these early movements, the economic conditions which in their view would have made possible the realization of the social vision of such movements had not yet developed ... But the second revolution in seventeenth century England which Hill describes was not a mere utopian dream. The proposals of the Diggers for communal cultivation of the soil, for the extension of education to all, and for the rapid development and dissemination of scientific knowledge were not only quite within the realm of possibility, they were exactly what was needed to develop the economy. (pp. 246, 247)

acting on, the message. Christopher Hill confirms that "bad communications still prevented the full development of a national market, restricted the possibilities of division of labour and so of capitalist developments in agriculture" (TER, p. 18).

Supposing even so the "Digger Revolution" actually did establish itself in Cromwell's England — would they have been joined by the (long defeated) German peasants, who, according to Engels in *The Peasant War in Ger-*

cally) aggressive pioneer capitalist farmers, and the system of production whose development they spearheaded was just as fully developed as it was possible to be to describe it as featuring capitalist relations (of production). The Diggers were their creation: dispossessed yeomen who were being or had been forced off the land and into the towns.

To the extent that the fact of dispossession was an act of violence against their neighbors, the gentry certainly had created a problem of "passive masses." But that does not mean Marx or Engels simply swallowed the data whole. Yes, the plan put forth by the Diggers was exactly what was needed to develop the economy. But they would not even have been there if someone had not evicted or threatened them (or legally swindled them); and it is very germane to ask, what would have been their consciousness if no one had disturbed them in their niche? For that is exactly why no one else echoed their call.

The suggestion, finally, that people might "develop the economy" as the Diggers demanded is a conundrum, since it ignores that there was a tale of two revolutions, the first of which created the second and proved the stronger of the two. If Stratman wants to use the Diggers as an example of how "class consciousness drives political and economic development and creates possibilities for social transformation" (p. 249), what role does he assign to the developing class consciousness of the capitalist class in this formative period of its history (for the English Revolution was most certainly their work)? Presumably his formula does not work only for the working class. If that is true, then Britain's enclosure movement has to rate as appropriate for its time, and the conversion of growing numbers of peasant farmers

into some preliminary form of working class (victimized by the developing gentry) must have been desirable.

Here is another difficulty with Stratman's "new paradigm." No sooner does it leave the safe harbor of the working class and its revolution than it meets with the stormy question of how to account for the evolution of the class struggle and the succession of ruling classes surrounding history on all sides. It is a question for whose discussion Marx prepared himself very thoroughly. Putting the question of social control and the criterion of class consciousness before the economic basis of the class struggle, by comparison, radically undermines the application of any methodology.

No socialist would take exception to the author's general assertion that the struggle to humanize (or more historically, to re-humanize) the world is a force constrained only by prevailing conditions.

All things considered, however, no socialist would take exception to the author's general assertion that the struggle to humanize (or more historically, to re-humanize) the world is a force constrained only by prevailing conditions, held in check by various combinations of factors. Wherever conditions do allow, this struggle moves forward.

Nor would socialists find fault with the author's qualifying as revolutionary the ongoing efforts of people to reshape their world in a way that makes it fit for human beings. Our criterion, however, is the definitive point of changeover, a "non-cumulative

developmental episode" (as Kuhn puts it) in which everyone at some point recognizes that the revolution in human consciousness has successfully translated itself into objective, statistical results. The object of socialist organizing, and eventually, electoral activities, is to prod society to reach that destination. All other destinations along the way are inappropriate stopovers: I am speaking, of course, of reforms aimed at patching up capitalism.

Stratman labors under the double misapprehension that he needs a paradigm to get there and that his unintended parody of historical materialism provides him with the opportunity to propose a "paradigm shift" that will precipitate a scientific revolution in the "science of revolution." As I suggest elsewhere, reading Kuhn in the spirit of his own work points toward a different result: Ordinary working people gain the consciousness of themselves as practitioners of social science defined broadly, thereby exploding the old, narrow, income-centered concepts of occupation and profession. The follow-up to this awakening is both revolution and new (or first) paradigm.

—Ron Elbert

Pass this copy on to a friend!

Drawings front and back covers and page 11 by I. Roger Stevens

WHY IS THERE A JUNGLE OUT THERE?

The parasite is a most fortunate individual. He probably inherited his wealth from a long line of ancestors dating back to the Mayflower. He hires the best brains in the country to manage his business while he enjoys life as he pleases. He contributes to the right campaigns to make sure that all the laws are passed in his favor. The government belongs to him, with a mighty military looking after him at home and abroad.

At home, his government controls the workers' "real wage" (what it will buy) very nicely, thank you! If and when the worker gets a raise in wages, he is systematically robbed of any increase by the application of new taxes and the ever-present inflation. He is always playing catch-up.

No one is immune from the effects of capitalism. You may have noticed in the news the terrible existence that workers all over the world are forced to endure: starvation, poverty, fighting everywhere — all for the lack of money? Isn't it strange there is no lack of idle workers? In a sane society money would not be necessary. The goods the worker produces would be freely available to him — people would not even be workers. Everyone would share equally in the world's resources with their five billion neighbors.



When you are sitting in your easy chair with a drink in one hand and the remote control in the other, watching the news, do you ever feel a twinge of guilt? Don't you wish you could put a stop to the misery? You can, you know: just vote for socialism, for common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production.

How did you like my sob story?

RAGGED- TROUSERED ABOLITIONISTS

I challenge you to sort this mess out:

Let me leave you with a picture of worldwide capitalism that is easy to understand. First, this planet is home to 5 billion of us humans, made up of a vast majority of workers, along with their bosses, the capitalists — "have-nots" and "haves." The capitalist, no matter where he resides or does business, finds that he must compete in the world's marketplace in order to survive at what he does. Worldwide, this economy produces all the commodities and services known to man. Commodities range from paper-clips to jumbo jets, while services cover many activities: postal workers, firefighters, maintenance,

the medical profession, etc. All manner of trades are necessary to achieve the ultimate goal, to compete in the world's markets and make a profit in the process.

The production of commodities is really incidental to the main objective, that of making a profit, which is embodied in the commodity during its manufacture, and realizing the profit by its ultimate sale. No sale equals no profit, and, conversely, lack of a profit opportunity equals no sale. You can't have one without the other. Profits can only be made by the exploitation of the worker.* To put it as simply as possible: the worker's day is usually eight hours long, but he is paid for only about two of them. This robbery is necessary to propagate the capitalist economic system; end the robbery, and you end "wage slavery" and capitalism, with its haves and have-nots. Workers exchange their labor-power, their mental and physical energies, for the value necessary to replace them — food, clothing and shelter. The length of the working day is the problem. Workers, with the aid of modern machinery, produce wealth far in excess of their needs. This surplus value accrues to the boss.

This condition produces objectors like the socialist party, whose sole objective, apart from showing workers how this robbery takes place, is to challenge them to end it immediately. It

reminds me of the general who swore he didn't force his men to fight; he simply marched them into enemy range, put a rifle in their hands and let them make up their own minds. The capitalist is forced to ride roughshod over anyone who interferes with his quest for profits. He must compete to survive. The socialist will be doing him a favor by putting an end to the profit system: we will certainly offer him a much better life than he provides us.

The future offers a bleak outlook: more slumps and more severe ones, with the threat of wars always looming over us as bosses vie with one another for the surplus value produced by the workers around the globe, the "ragged-trousered philanthropists" (I remember a book with that title, many years ago).

Can you sort out this mess? I hope so...

TO INSANITY...

Have you noticed that wherever there is a dollar to be made someone is going to make it? Whether legally or otherwise. For instance, there is the auto mechanic who does unnecessary work on your car ... who will sometimes sabotage the car to ensure that he will see you in another month or so; the doctor who performs unnecessary tests or operations, who gets kickbacks from hospitals and drug manufacturers; the police person who looks the other way, for a price — who will arrest a person who pro-

vides the easiest conviction, whether guilty or not — who keeps a "throw-away" gun handy in case he shoots an unarmed suspect; the sales person who is most gratified if he sells the unsuspecting a lemon; the financial wizard who is able to operate on the shady side of the law and bilk you of all your savings.

It is almost impossible to escape the pitfalls of capitalism sometime during your lifetime. These con-men are experts in their respective fields, and no matter how wary we might be, we are victimized periodically. I've heard it said that almost anyone can be tempted if the bribe is large enough. There are exceptions, of course, but one wonders where their conscience intervenes. Consider the drug pusher who contributes to ruining many lives for the almighty dollar.

Socialism will eliminate all the above automatically, because the system will operate without money and the accumulation of wealth will be impossible. Indeed, the desire for more than one needs will be a sign of idiocy.

...AND BEYOND!

I get a sardonic chuckle out of some of the unemployment figures that the government likes to share with us. They tend to brag when the rate gets down around six percent, when it would indicate that the economy is healthy. I notice today that they Dow dropped about 550 points

which indicates that there are some folks who are uncertain about the economy.

The unemployment rate doesn't concern me as much as the minimum wage. There are millions of folks who cannot possibly "make a living," without help, on that income, especially when forced to work short shifts, broken shifts

and "be available when we need you, buddy" type jobs.

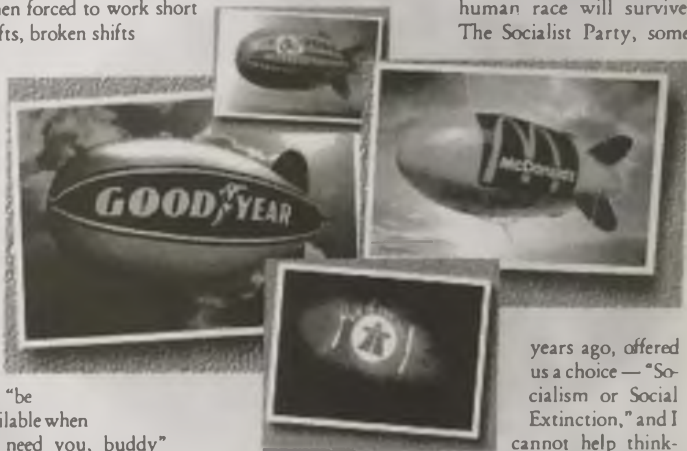
You may think that these underpaid folks could improve their position in society if they chose to study and learn a profession? How quaint! Suppose everyone was qualified to hold a better than average job, but alas, the only jobs available were the very ones that pay minimum wage. What does one do in situations like that? They would have to be filled by those highly skilled folks who we have urged to study and improve their position in society. I think I recall that some college graduates were observed washing dishes in some restaurant. So you must understand the basic rules of capitalism, to wit:

wages and salaries are determined by supply and demand. If you are an excellent basketball or football player you may demand two or three million a year, but only if someone needs you...

There is little solace for the underpaid in a situation

Lenin took office in Russia and they told the world then that Russia was not yet ready to accept Socialism. History has proven us right. No country has yet accomplished that feat, for it must be a worldwide effort, with many countries involved.

One wonders if the human race will survive. The Socialist Party, some



years ago, offered us a choice — "Socialism or Social Extinction," and I cannot help think-

of this sort. No matter that a floor sweeper is just as necessary as the plant engineer, in the overall operation of the plant. The job that requires no special skill can easily be filled, whereas a good engineer may be hard to find.

This is the way Capitalism operates. It is not the ideal way, however. We Socialists can offer a different criterion: "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs." This is the life-style I want. Are you ready for it?

Both the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the World Socialist Party of the U.S. have been around a long time... the SPGB since 1904. They were there when

ing of Marx's prediction: "Capital not only lives upon labor, but like a Lord, drags with it to the grave the corpses of its slaves."

WHAT IS A WAGE-SLAVE?

Let us examine Marx's economic theories. He is credited with the discovery of "surplus value" and how to evaluate it. He pointed out that what the employee sold to the employer was his "power to labor." What he sold was his "mental and physical energies" and furthermore he sold them for what they were worth, namely, the amount of food, clothing and shelter

Continues on next page

necessary to maintain and replace it. Marx determined that anything produced over the value of the worker's wages was "surplus value" and accrued to the employer.

During feudal times the worker was allowed to work a strip of land for his own use providing he worked a similar strip for lord and master. The rate of exploitation was obviously 100 percent. Today, if a worker labor for eight hours a day and his wages represent only two hours of the day's work, the rate of exploitation is 200 percent. If his wages represent only one hour of the work day, then he is exploited at the rate of 400 percent, and though this is deplorable on the surface we must notice that he still gets a living wage, whereas the employer, though he gets more commodities, they do not represent much more "value." He is obliged to sell many more items to realize the same profit.

The market will eventually restrict his production and workers will become redundant. As fewer workers are exploited, the employer must expect less profits and more expenses because of increased unemployment. As Marx puts it, "Capital is concentrated into fewer hands." "The expropriators become expropriated." One can see the effects in the daily news, with the reports of merging, downsizing and the closure of factories in one country and the opening of factories in other countries where labor is cheaper. I might point out that this is a relatively brief respite from the inevitable end of another economic order. Such is man's progression.

It will be interesting to see how the world's politicians can wriggle out of the problems that the foreseeable future promises. The pie is getting smaller, and something always has to give. Modern "wage-slaves," nor-

mally dependent on a job and wages for a living, will depend more and more on the ability of the master class to support them in their hour of need. Something the master class and their government may not be able to do adequately. Those wage slaves that do not represent any economic worth may be neglected and left to their own devices. For instance, those unfortunate in the outback of Australia, Africa, Cambodia and other isolated places.

More problems affecting the world in general will rear their ugly heads. There is always the threat of wars with the new technology and the old; the globe-warming problem; and of course, there are countries that go bankrupt and must be helped so that the capitalist system is not jeopardized. Much like a poker game, when one person wins all the money, the

only way to restart the game, is to give the winnings back so that the game can continue.

Become a Socialist and enjoy the show. It is becoming hilarious.

—W.H.

** EDITOR'S COMMENT. Even where companies style themselves "not for profit," this only means their net profit is supposed to equal zero; they still remain perfectly free to carry on the process of exploitation as though they were pursuing the objective of clearing a net profit. The concept of profit we define, at all events, through its function in wealth production, as surplus value generated by workers using their abilities rather than as simply a return on capital invested.*





Dr. Marx and Mr. Lenin

The notion of a vanguard party of disciplined professional revolutionaries in no way completes Marx's analysis of capitalist production. In fact, it directly undermines the identification between party and class that Marx considered essential to the working class's emancipating itself. An organization of professional revolutionaries by definition becomes a party that acts for the working class. The whole concept of a vanguard party abrogates the autonomy of the working class acting as a conscious majority. Lenin was not being haughty when he argued, in *What is to be Done?*, that

workers, left to themselves, could develop only trade-union consciousness: if he was to have an organization of professional revolutionaries, an autonomous working class would be a horrible nuisance for the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). His diatribe against the Mensheviks spelled this out very plainly.

Such a party, with even the very best intentions, could never be more than an academic adjunct to a real working-class revolution. With Lenin's plans at first to support the introduction of a bourgeois republic and later, in the midst of war, to

take it over, the simple logic of the situation, as the record makes clear, pointed toward the speedy demise of any workers' revolution if workers should ever put their trust in the Bolsheviks. Stratman (rather miraculously, considering his own foolish magnanimity toward Lenin) learned to understand how anti-working-class the Bolsheviks really were — a policy not forced by circumstances, but developed at Lenin's prodding. Lenin was the enemy of the Russian working class. Stratman's understanding, on the other hand, shows its unevenness in the following statement:

Lenin's conception of the nature and role of the party, and of the content of political consciousness — knowledge of the "laws of capitalism" and the effects of their operation on all of society — faithfully reflected Marx's idea of "the science of revolution" (p. 167).

Where Marx speaks of a class making a revolution, he means — in this context — that class is the active subject, that the individuals who work for a living are the ones who initiate, control and develop the revo-



lutionary changeover. This means unequivocally that no political organization, not even one professing its undying love for working people, can fill workers' heads with ideas and motivations, lead them to the revolution or generally substitute itself for the entire class as the instigator of revolution — and still remain part of the working class. Stratman can produce no evidence, except perhaps his own recollections of belonging to such an organization, that Lenin's "improvements" "faithfully reflected Marx's idea of 'the science of revolution.'" This he is just making up.

He seems, however, to have swung from supporting the myth that Lenin lined up worshipfully behind Marx, as a technician implementing the oracles of a visionary, to simply attacking it, never once stopping to consider whether Lenin might not have been an outright fraud as a Marxist. Marx advocated socialism (common ownership) worldwide, starting with European society, as the result of the working class abolishing its own relation of dependence on capital. If Russian workers needed to put on the armor of undemocratic professionalism to achieve socialism, then socialism could not be achieved just yet. But Stratman has another interpretation:

Lenin's great contribution to Marxism was to show that political consciousness, developed and disseminated through a disciplined party of professional revolutionaries, is the decisive factor in Marxist revolution. With his creation of a vanguard party dedicated to the task of revolution, Lenin supplied to Marxism the vital element it was missing: conscious human subjects who by their own actions could create the conditions for revolutionary change. (p. 143)

Stratman may be pardoned for thinking that this appeal to professionalism meets Kuhn's terms for the maturity of a science and its readiness for a paradigm change, if he in fact thought that. Were it true, however, the next paradigm change would feature increased professionalization rather than learning from the people, which actually humbles the experts

and trims off much of their nuts-and-bolts virtuosity. Entrusting the overthrow of capitalism to professional experts is at all events a contradiction in terms: if consciousness is the key, no one can have the workers' thoughts but the workers themselves — and this means autonomous organization. Lenin's only contribution to Marxism (and it was by no means a great one) was a black eye, a fat lip and a "doctor's bill."

Unfortunately, the only product of Dr. Lenin's laboratory seems to have been a Frankenstein's monster:

Indeed, the whole concept of a "proletarian state" is a joke: it is not a Marxist idea at all. It is certainly laced with a combination of fraud and self-deception.

It is no mistake that, whatever their distortions of socialist revolution as Marx and others envisioned it, only Marxist-Leninist parties have succeeded in making revolutions based on Marxism. The world-wide influence of the Bolsheviks in the wake of the Russian Revolution was not simply a function of the prestige they enjoyed as the leaders of the first successful workers' revolution. It was a function of the fact that only they had discovered how to practice Marxism as a science of revolution (p. 168).

Indeed, the whole concept of a "proletarian state" is a joke: it is not a Marxist idea at all. It is certainly laced with a combination of fraud and self-deception. Socialism is communism, on the other hand; another synonym for it is "common ownership." A state, as Marx pointed out more than once, expresses no real "general interest"; any claim that any class has to speak for society as a whole is inherently counterfeit; and that includes the working class. Because Lenin was not a qualified Marxist, he could easily paper this little problem over. To have knowingly and consciously opted to have his Bolsheviks rule over a class society while announcing eventual preparations for the abolition of class rule makes him guilty of the most

brazen contempt for Marx's thinking. If he was really applying Marx's "model," he had to say that socialism was not immediately on the agenda; but saying this would have cost the Bolsheviks worker and peasant support. As a good Social Democrat, he could not abide that thought. Nor did he sacrifice the opportunity of controlling a state to the rigors of communist logic or a communist policy.

If Stratman knows these were really proto-capitalists running an obviously capitalist show, argues that capitalism makes for bad social sci-

ence (which incriminates those who use social science to defend it) and even recognizes that their "revolutions" were bogus operations whose manipulative character implicitly invalidated them — why does he not say so?

A more thorough grounding in Marxist social theory, would eliminate

this problem, if he cared to pursue it.

His evaluation of Leninism on page 169 is scientifically and historically a tissue of inaccuracies:

For all its disastrous effects [sic], Leninism represents an historic advance in the history of revolutionary thought, and in the ability of human beings to become the conscious makers of history. The very reason that the Bolsheviks, under Lenin's leadership, were able to play a decisive role in the Russian Revolution, is that only Leninist doctrine showed the possibility and the means within Marxism for conscious human subjects to understand and to master the huge unfolding forces of class society in revolutionary change. Marxist-Leninist parties have succeeded in leading revolutions to the extent that they have understood the capacity of human consciousness and initiative to shape history.

This may reflect Stratman's former politics, but to socialists who pointed out the real nature of Leninism from the outset (1918), it sounds more like tripe. The Bolsheviks did not understand "the capacity of human consciousness and initiative to shape history." Philosophically speaking, they were — under Lenin's influence — a pack of charlatans who deliberately limited themselves to introducing re-

forms whose effects they knew would make them powerful men — all the while letting on before the rest of the world's working class that "ultimately" they planned to engineer the "higher stage" of "full communism." In the 60s they actually began to issue the most incredible nonsense about how the "lower stage" was almost finished and the "higher stage" was about to be implemented. Can anyone who deploys such shabby PR gimmicks have any insight into the workings of human consciousness?

Lenin believed that workers have no goals or vision but their own self-interest. With other prominent Marxists, he believed that revolutionary ideas come not from workers but from intellectuals (p. 144).

It was not Marx but Lenin who pronounced the infamous dictum that, "left to themselves, workers are capable only of trade-union consciousness"; it was Marx (not Lenin) who, in telling workers to go ahead and abolish the condition that made them slaves (the wages system), implied that workers were failing to live up to their revolutionary potential if they remained mired in a "trade-union mentality." Merely by changing their views they could free themselves. When Lenin addressed them, it was to tell them what was good for them, to talk down to them in assuming their simple minds could never penetrate uninstructed to the heights of expertise of his professional colleagues, all (or most) of them also members of the same intelligentsia, or else trained by them.

The fact that "other prominent Marxists" viewed "revolutionary ideas [as coming] not from workers but from intellectuals" does not mean that Marx shared this opinion of the "other prominent Marxists." I challenge

Stratman to locate one passage in any of Marx's writings (his works, his notes or his correspondence) in which he expressed such a view. We know Lenin and Kautsky explicitly held this theory, and it is indicative that the two rivals both considered it widespread among the German Social Democrats. Stratman apparently has not reflected on the incompatibility of this opinion of Lenin's and Kautsky's with the well-known view of Marx and Engels that the emancipation of the working class must, as stated, be the work of the working class itself.

What Stratman calls "practical revolutionary politics" (p. 166) was, from Marx's own standpoint, the

toral support that went with it. This was already in itself a corrupting factor, and with the First World War it precipitated a crisis of confidence in the socialist object they saluted but did not support. The Bolshevik position in 1917 was dictated essentially by considerations of Russian national interest and reflected exactly the same opportunism as the German Social Democrats had displayed in 1914.

Stratman brings to the politics of socialism an assumption that the "mainstream Marxist organizations" (organizations of methodologists, of people who analyzed society from the standpoint of historical materialism?) could adequately reflect the significance of Marx's methodology, and that their immediate organizing activities did not matter so long as they "paid lip-service to the ideals [?] of working-class revolution."

This is actually a very Social-Democratic idea. What workers organize for has necessarily to be what they plan to accomplish: if they do not plan immediately to replace the wages system with one based on free community access, they have not created "an organization of revolutionaries," and their politics are not revolutionary — however "practical" their justification. Anyone can use Marxist theory to "keep struggle within the bounds of the capitalist economy" if this is detached from the object, the policy, that would allow them to use it for revolutionary purposes. Doctors can also keep patients "alive" on life-support systems when the patients would otherwise die: it is nevertheless reasonable to suspect that this subverts the whole purpose of medical treatment in the first place. Using Marx's methodology to achieve political, social or economic equilibrium within capitalism is equally pointless.

Despite his confusions, Stratman correctly argues that the Social-Democratic organizations were not really revolutionary. That they were

If workers do not plan immediately to replace the wages system with one based on free community access, they have not created "an organization of revolutionaries," and their politics are not revolutionary — however "practical" their justification.

politics of reforming capitalism. He made no bones about it in his critique of the 1871 Gotha Program. His "vision proved not to be of much help to the Social Democrats" or to the Bolsheviks, because both parties were organized along primarily reformist lines, almost from the very start. All of them included revolutionary socialists among their members, but none of them sought to mobilize these members ("merged with the working class") for the immediate abolition of the wages system, as Marx thought they should.

The entire Social-Democratic movement — the Bolsheviks included — was instead obsessed with expanding working-class participation in elections and (of course) gaining the elec-

organizations containing members who to a large extent were Marxists does not really suffice to make them "Marxist organizations," however. Much more serious is his implied acceptance of the relative unimportance, or ambivalence, of immediate policy objects in dividing revolutionary from non-revolutionary movements.

The "Minimum Program" was the Social-Democratic code phrase for the pursuit of reforms. What they (and most "Marxists") overlooked was that the corollary to being a party merged with the working class was the merging also of "minimum" and "maximum" programs. No organization can be revolutionary unless it has collapsed both into a single, unified organizing rationale. This compels it to forswear championing improvements in capitalism on the grounds that advocacy of all improvements is equally pernicious. This does not preclude accepting whatever reforms are implemented. But no socialist (revolutionary) organization can conceptualize its immediate policy, its object, its "campaign," within the limits of capitalism; if it does, it is not socialist — not revolutionary — whether or not it espouses

revolutionary "ideals" of an ultimate or general nature.

Wages and capital are the source of all social control today. Stratman expresses confidence in the readiness of workers to set the project of revolution in motion forthwith: but lack of a distinction between organizing for immediate short-term and immediate revolutionary purposes will only recreate the old Social-Democratic dilemma all over again — and hasten the choice of reformism. The pressure is there — and very strong.

Following is the kind of gullible restatement on which the credibility of "Marxism-Leninism" long depended: "Under the leadership of the Bolsheviks," says Stratman,

the Russian Revolution smashed the power of the bourgeoisie and the property relations of private ownership on which their power rested. It did not alter "the authoritarian relations of production characteristic of all class societies" [quoting Maurice Brinton in *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*: 1917 to 1921]. The effect of Bolshevik leadership on the workers' revolution was that the Russian workers exchanged new masters for old — Communists for capitalists — within a set of productive relations which were essentially unchanged (p. 145).

How could the "property relations of private ownership on which [the bourgeoisie's] power rested" have been "smashed" if the Bolsheviks simply replaced the bourgeoisie? But any

"smashing" that was done was restricted to the pages of Lenin's (and others') writings and speeches, because states and economies are not things: they are functions.

This, however, is just the point. If Lenin, the minimum leader of the Bolsheviks, deliberately stretched phrases from Marx to make Marx fit his project, knowing all the while that the phrases were just phrases, then the nature of his "borrowing" or "tutelage" turns out to be a blatant public-relations fraud, and the assumptions Stratman sees him as sharing with Marx are nonexistent. Far from smashing the "property relations of private ownership on which [the bourgeoisie's] power rested," the Bolshevik revolution depended tightly on preserving, even strengthening, those relations, as Trotsky observed (p. 147). As Lenin saw it, what needed replacing was not capitalism but the form in which property was owned — in Russia, not worldwide. When it comes to Social Democrats (including Lenin), Stratman apparently goes in for what many more credulous folks also go in for: never questioning the politicians' declarations about what they stand for.

—Ron Elbert

SAMUEL LEIGHT

We regret to announce the death of Comrade Sam Leight, an accomplished world traveler in his own right, and above all (like any good socialist) a citizen of the world. He originally came to the World Socialist Party in this country from the Socialist Party of Great Britain. An emphatic advocate of the view that the vast majority of workers have never even heard of the case for socialism, he aired short radio talks on socialism in Tucson, Arizona, for several years. He would carefully clear each text with the National Administrative Committee before broadcasting it. Subsequently he turned the scripts into two books, *World Withou... Wages* and *The Futility of Reformism*. Although he operated a real-estate business that kept him very busy, he always had time to get letters to the editor published in one or another of Tucson's newspapers. He also took the step, on his own initiative, of paying for display advertisements in the same papers, using different topical issues to explain the socialist position. The movement will be a little poorer for his departure. ☺



Zionism and nationalism

Stratman preoccupies himself almost exclusively with the ~~working class~~ aspect of class struggle, as an ongoing pitched battle fought between working people and those who would lead (i.e., control) them. His views on nationalism reflect this focus, as in the case of what he calls "black nationalism." But his attempt to drive the round peg of Zionism into the square hole of nationalism calls for some further comment.

Under the heading, "Nationalism in Historical Perspective," he writes: "The theoretical and practical impetus communism gave to nationalism has had enormous implications for the history of the 20th century. The history of Zionism — Jewish nationalism — is a case in point" (p. 184). If we stop to reflect on this however, "Jewish nationalism," far from being a "case in point," is a highly problematic notion. The goal of creating a "Jewish homeland" is hobbled by the pre-nationalist framework in which contemporary Jewish identities were forged historically. The concept of a Jewish nation-state is by definition culturally, socially and historically artificial. Moreover, despite this impressive-sounding opener, he never does get around to discussing the Leninists' responsibility for setting back the cause of revolution.

He proceeds rather to describe his version of Zionist history, culled mostly from Lenni Brenner's 1983 book, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* — a work that makes no secret of its tendentious aims. Stratman's perception that nationalism is "always ferociously reactionary" rings true enough, but he plainly thinks nothing better exemplifies it than Zionism. Taking his cues directly from his source, Stratman argues that "Zionists warmly embraced Mussolini and Italian Fascism" and "sought the patronage of Adolph Hitler, not once but repeatedly, after 1933" (p. 185). "By 1936," he states, "they started to sell Hitler's goods in Britain," collaborating with the Nazis to break the boycott called in March 1933 by the Jewish War Veterans of New York (p. 186).

There are many things wrong with this use of the concept. First among them is his lopsided concentration on a historically peripheral variant of nationalism: if he

wants to debunk that, why pay so much attention to Zionism? Why ignore the more blatant instances?

Nor could you tell, from Brenner's and Stratman's account of it, that many workers on the Left actually put a lot of sweat into building the foundations of the Israeli state. Stratman can apotheosize on the one hand the Palestinian victims of Israeli state terrorism, but he ignores on the other the sincere motives of Jewish workers who felt, however mistakenly, that they could make a better world by taking advantage of the Zionist enterprise to set up rural communities where people could once again live like human beings.

His "new paradigm" also causes him to miss the spectacle of those same leftists proclaiming their own confusion. How were they going to solve the problems of even a part of the world's working class by promoting the establishment of yet another nation-state? They were voluntarily carrying out the work of their sworn class enemies. Stratman's portrait of Zionism seems overdrawn to the point of caricature.

But his real interest is more contemporaneous — and little illustrative of nationalism. He states editorially that "the uprising of Palestinians against the Israeli state has brought to light the heroism of the common people of Palestine. The world has watched in horror as Israeli troops murder Palestinian children for throwing stones, or capture them and smash the bones of their hands and arms and legs" (p. 187). He catalogues the horrors of Israeli repression, concluding: "The savagery of Zionism is matched only by its hypocrisy. Its claim to represent the welfare and the values of ordinary Jews is an ugly lie" (p. 188).

An impassioned, if extraordinarily one-sided, view of nationalism it certainly is. But Zionism is too historically complex a phenomenon to serve as a good case study of nationalism. Stratman's treatment is so current-affairs oriented it upstages his own grasp of the fact that nationalism is before all else a poison.

—Fenton



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not judge it sufficient to define revolution at the level of concrete experience. This has the merit of not mistaking reformist struggles for expressions of revolutionary consciousness, which in the end must explicitly formulate the abolition of capital and its wages system and stick to that. Impulse is a weak vessel conceptually and does not provide an adequate institutional basis for setting up a society based on values of solidarity and equality — which themselves require an institutional form of some kind.

Then again, a revolution must *succeed* to be called that; otherwise, it never attains the degree of generality corresponding to a consciousness based on human values. When people opt for replacing capitalist (sub-human) institutions with human ones, they need to know why they are doing it. Failing that, a human-centered consciousness will inevitably be replaced by one that changes from one development to the next, one that is historically opportunist (not knowing what it seeks). For a revolution to embody social consciousness, that consciousness must be general and have a specifically economic component.

Third, economic experiences and institutions are shared by both capitalist and working classes. Stratman's emphasis on the primacy of social control dims his perceptiveness on this point. His distancing himself from the economic dimension of social analysis, which constitutes the strong point of historical materialism, leaves him open to wishing that developments within the class struggle will turn out to have been revolutionary when they were in fact only keeping people pointed at dealing with emergencies and trying to patch up the system. If workers (and what do "workers" do?) are going to "make a new world" based on *their* values and attitudes rather than on those of capitalists, they have to take the initiative and step out of their sub-human condition. The capitalist class has no reason to do so, and every reason not to; but both classes are sub-human entities (cf. *German Ideology*, p. 20). It is for this reason that concrete activities need a common conceptual anchor to produce a coherent, society-wide result.

What people have to do is formulate a "revolutionary project" that directly embodies their changed consciousness, antipathetic to ruling-class values ("ruling ideas"). The revolution's goal must remain immediately achiev-

able. Adding "steps" in succession to the receding vision of an "ultimate goal" is the classic recipe for slipping by degrees into a reformist point of view. While we can respect Stratman's consistency in bifurcating his three cases of "revolutions" into popular impulses vs. onset of repression, a closer look at those movements discloses that in each case the "impulse" to revolution gravitated around a demand for reforms. He nevertheless appears to think the incipient revolutionism concealed in the struggle of ordinary working people will somehow rescue their project of revolution from the jaws of reformism. There is no basis for thinking so, in the absence of a stabilizing economic criterion, and many self-assured revolutionaries have littered the historical record with a trail of failed expectations.

The action of the establishment in repressing these "revolutionary" movements was tied very narrowly to its dependence on those whom it oppressed; the repressibility of their "revolutions" depended, in its turn, on the institutionalized forms of exploitation evolved under capital-

ism up to that point. Consequently, the success or failure of a revolution against the rule of capital must be measured against the ability of capitalist institutions to persist. A movement can be revolutionary and still fail to achieve its goals; but unless it sets out to replace capitalism's sub-human institutions with human ones, and does so, no revolution occurs. What caused these "revolutions"

Stratman's distancing himself from the economic dimension of social analysis leaves him open to wishing that developments within the class struggle will turn out to have been revolutionary when they were in fact only keeping people pointed at dealing with emergencies and trying to patch up the system.

to fail was not the repression of the authorities but the weak, incoherent consciousness of the revolutionaries, whose thoughts did not extend immediately past a number of concrete (immediate) demands.

If people are not making a revolution with the conscious understanding that they are replacing something oppressive, then what they are striving for in the short run cannot be revolutionary by accident or implication. Were the people of Russia in 1917, of China in 1949 or of Vietnam in 1954 actually yearning to shake off a system of control (capitalism) — or were they following a bunch of nuts-and-bolts elitists down the garden path of reforms, as has so often happened in the history of class struggle? Even a very superficial reading of *Socialist Uprising in China's Countryside*, that classic of Maoist double-talk, brings out that what China's rural majority (even larger

Socialism—a classless, wageless, moneyless society with free access to all goods and services—is necessary and possible. The only obstacle to it in our time is the lack of a class-conscious political majority. Are YOU a socialist? You might recognize some of your own ideas in the following statements.

Capitalism, even with reforms, can not function in the interests of the working class. Capitalism, by its very nature, requires continual "reforms"; yet reforms cannot alter the basic relationship of wage-labor and capital and would not be considered, to begin with, if their legislation would lead to disturbing this relationship. Reforms, in other words, are designed to make capitalism more palatable to the working class by holding out the false hope of an improvement in their condition. To whatever extent they afford improvement, reforms benefit the capitalist class, not the working class.

To establish socialism the working class must first gain control of the powers of government through their political organization. It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. State power gives control of the main avenues of education and propaganda—either directly or indirectly—and of the armed forces that frequently and efficiently crush ill-conceived working class attempts at violent opposition. The one way it is possible in a highly developed capitalism to oust the capitalist class from its ownership and control over the means of production and distribution is to first strip it of its control over the state.

Once this is accomplished the state will be converted from a government over people to an administration of community affairs (both locally and on a world scale). The World Socialist Party of the United States advocates the ballot, and no other method, as a means of abolishing capitalism.

Members of the World Socialist Party do not support — either directly or indirectly — members of any other political party. It is always possible, even if difficult in some instances, to vote for world socialism by writing in the name of the Party and a member for a particular legislative office. Our main task, however, is to make socialists and not to advocate use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

The World Socialist Party rejects the theory of leadership. Neither individual "great" personalities nor "revolutionary vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class "must be the work of the working class itself." Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administrators to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or "vanguards," never!

There is an irreconcilable conflict between scientific socialism and religion. Socialists reject religion for two main reasons:

- Religion divides the universe into spiritual and physical realms, and all religions offer their adherents relief from their earthly problems through some form of appeal to the spiritual. Socialists see the cause of the problems that wrack human society as material and political. We see the solution as one involving material and political, not spiritual, means.

- Religions ally themselves with the institutions of class society. Particular religious organizations and leaders may, and frequently do, rebel against what they deem injustice, even suffering imprisonment and worse for their efforts. But they seek their solutions within the framework of the system socialists aim to abolish. One cannot understand the development of social evolution by resorting to religious ideas.

The system of society formerly in effect in Russia, and still in effect in China and other so-called socialist or communist countries, is state capitalism. Goods and services, in those countries, as in avowedly capitalist lands,

were always produced for sale on a market with a view to profit and not, primarily, for use. The placing of industry under the control of the state in no way alters the basic relationships of wage-labor and capital. The working class remains a class of wage slaves. The class that controls the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value eating class.

Trade unionism is the means by which wage workers organize to "bargain collectively" so that they might sell their labor power at the best possible price and try to improve working conditions. The unorganized have no economic weapon with which to resist the attempts of capital to beat down their standards. But unions must work within the framework of capitalism. They are useful, then, to but a limited extent. They can do nothing toward lessening unemployment, for example.

In fact, they encourage employers to introduce more efficient methods in order to overcome added costs of higher wages and thereby hasten and increase unemployment. More and more the tendency of industry is toward a greater mass of production with fewer employees. Unions must, by their very nature, encourage such development although they are also known, occasionally, to resist this natural trend through what employers like to call "featherbedding." As Marx put it instead of the conservative motto, "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work," the workers ought to inscribe upon their banner "abolition of the wages system." Ø

Membership in the World Socialist Party of the United States requires an understanding of and agreement with what we consider to be the basis of scientific socialism. We have always been convinced that a worldwide system based upon production for use, rather than for sale on a market, requires that a majority of the population be socialist in attitude. Events since the establishment of the World Socialist Movement have, we maintain, proven the validity of this judgment. If you are in general agreement with these statements, we invite you to join our organization.

**Are
YOU a
socialist?**

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Socialist Party of Great Britain <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/>

in 1949 than Russia's in 1917) wanted was something very akin to Fabian-style "municipal socialism."

A great deal turns on this distinction between a revolution in human consciousness (on the part of ordinary working people) and the Left's system-battling policies of reform. The author understands the value of it and obviously sees through the Left *organizationally*:

The problem of the left can be stated very simply: it does not believe that revolution is possible ... The left believes, in fact, that the great majority of people are deeply imbued with the values and outlook of capitalism and are content to live within the system as it is ... As a consequence, the left of today is trapped within a view of people which is essentially negative ... it refuses to challenge the system (pp. 171, 172, *passim*).

He nevertheless shows considerable difficulty in separating leftist negativism toward people from the conscious, majority understanding that culminates in real democracy embodying values of solidarity and equality. As a result, he sees an "impulse" to revolution in actions whose "event horizon" is automatically the reform of capitalism.

The grain of truth in this, of course, is the negative appraisal people make of capitalism and its givens. The only further corollary is their failure to carry their thoughts beyond those givens — which would be the revolutionary act. Meanwhile, the Left institutionalizes working people's crude reactions to capitalism, confusing the possible with the historical, and remains unable to cross the threshold of changes whose only effect can be to prolong the system. Leftism over the centuries has in fact tended to mellow toward an acceptance of capitalist assumptions and values: accommodationism is a kind of leavening agent that buys capital time, provided capital can learn to bargain with the Left.

Socialists often get laughed at (or worse) for insisting that pursuing reforms is an anti-working-class policy; but on this point Stratman is certainly right. If people "taught" him, however, that they wanted less than revolutionary changes, would he be able to take a stand on principle? If people are always trying to assert values and relationships based on equality and solidarity (when left to themselves), and if revolutionary theory must get in touch with these values and attitudes, yet the sources of interference from the surrounding capitalism succeed in misleading workers, the appearance of being in the minority (from a reactionary standpoint) creates a certain pressure on the revolutionary organization, which tends to isolate it. What is the difference between "the working class not knowing what it knows" (p. 272) and its being "imbued with capitalist values" (p.

171) if the working class does not reject those values *explicitly* in favor of reorganizing society to reflect people's values and meet their needs?

Let us now take a closer look at three historical instances of revolution as Stratman understands it: Russia in 1917, China in 1949 and France in 1968. None of these demonstrate a driving consciousness of the need to reorganize the basis of human society: each of them only represented, at most, as he puts it, a "challenge" to capital: to the "power of the corporate and government élite to direct society at their will" (p. 83). Since repression is the *normal* mode by which this élite secures its control (its privileged monopoly of economic activity), "challenges" are but so many learning experiences for it. The growth of the machinery of repression, from the balmy days of 1848 to the chilled-out 1990s, illustrates this only too well.

"Challenges" are not educational for those who mount them unless they at least can learn to see themselves (united) as a countervailing force to that of capital: but they will not be able to gain *this* insight unless they see their goal as an act of system replacement (Kuhn's "incompatibility") and move immediately to carry it out. Something is not "openly revolutionary" (p. 84) just because it voices opposition to capitalism and capitalist power.

Stratman's analysis of the Bolshevik destruction of the Factory Committees once they took power, in spite of his misplaced admiration for Lenin's accomplishments in developing the "science of revolution," demonstrates (perhaps inadvertently) the absolutely critical role played by a social change of consciousness in pushing a revolution beyond the threshold of reformism. Given that the Russian people who made the revolution were faced with such friends in power, whatever the two

of them did together could not have "helped to lead the revolutionary struggle forward" because the Bolsheviks were not immediately interested in something so radical as that.

The struggle could only have been revolutionary if all those making it had revolutionary aims, that is, if their consciousness was revolutionary. The Bolsheviks, who called upon the workers and peasants to make a revolution, themselves had no revolutionary consciousness, which automatically limited the struggle they helped to lead forward to one over reforms. No revolutionary struggle existed in Russia at that time to lead forward — not, at any rate, in the sense of abolishing the wages system. The fact that the Bolsheviks aimed to "control the economic and political life of the country" betrays their

The Left institutionalizes working people's crude reactions to capitalism, confusing the possible with the historical, and remains unable to cross the threshold.

policy of reforming, not eliminating, capitalism.

In the case of China, Stratman's account (pp. 109, 110) of how the self-anointed Communist Party held out the promise of land reform to the peasantry likewise illustrates the policy of what world socialists define as a reformist organization. It provides yet another example of the captious Leninist style of manipulative reasoning and its tendency to cloud the thoughts of even the power-trippers themselves. If the peasants were seeking only land reform, a "fake-democratic" revolution might have given them this, but it could not be a revolution to overthrow the rule of capital and establish a society based on relations of equality and solidarity (or on common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production and distribution); it could only be a capitalist revolution.

Since what is revolutionary requires a revolution, it should follow that the energies of the peasant masses were not really revolutionary *for purposes of eliminating capitalism*. The "Communist" Party, if it were to be true to its name, and even if it could count on the unwavering support of all workers in China, would still have had the support of only a tiny percentage of the population in 1949 — and that assumes the Party was proposing to abolish the wages system as the Revolution's object (of course, it was not).

The "Communist" Party would need the support of China's peasants if it was to take power; and it could get this support only by promising land reform. A policy of abolishing wages and capital would have said very little to most of China's peasantry, since at that time the institutions of production for profit scarcely existed there, compared to agrarian populations in already developed countries. China's peasantry in 1949 was struggling, not against an emerging class of capitalist farmers like the English Levellers and Diggers, but against a class of non-capitalist landlords. A revolution against those landlords could not under the circumstances have resulted in the establishment of a society centered on relations of solidarity and equality. Not surprisingly, the "Communist" Party had to redefine the terms socialism and communism just to make itself heard before such an audience. The later movement Stratman describes in Chapter 5 ("The 'Ultra-Left' in the Cultural Revolution") could not have occurred *except* on the assumption that some capitalist elite had already succeeded in establishing a dehumanizing regime based on national (capitalist) liberation.

For a somewhat different reason, his description of "the May [1968] Revolution" in France is equally misconceived:

[It] was not about wages or what reformist unions generally present as the "economic issues" ... Rather than an uprising against economic deprivation, the revolt was a movement of the whole working class against the totality of capitalist alienation: boring jobs, mindless consumerism, powerlessness. The French May showed that the alienation charac-

teristic of modern society is not necessary or permanent — that beneath the calm surface of capitalist control lie forces capable of springing the whole structure into oblivion (p. 103).

The energies of China's peasant masses were not really revolutionary for purposes of eliminating capitalism.

We note here the author's shifting use of the term "revolution": "The May Revolution," he argues, "against the totality of capitalist alienation"

"brought France to the brink of revolution" (p. 103). [My emphasis.] The apparent semantic confusion actually has a reasonable justification, however. True, he has failed to apply his own terminology consistently. But he is in fact attempting to evaluate, alternately, the subjective and the objective aspects of the May 1968 uprising. Subjectively, he explains, it embodied the revolutionary consciousness of ordinary people.

Objectively considered, on the other hand, what kind of revolution could have taken place in one country near the pinnacle of capitalist power? The totality of capitalist alienation occurs worldwide — it is not confined to France. A revolution *against* capitalism must necessarily be a revolution for, as Stratman puts it, a human world. Yet the events of May 1968 never got beyond the stage of protest against French capitalism: for this to have happened, more would have to have assailed the capitalist system in the sixties than revolts and insurgencies in many countries — but more could not have happened on that scale, in that coherent a fashion, without a generalized worldwide consensus among workers that capitalism does not work for them. ("Changing all the relationships and institutions in society to reflect the values of solidarity and equality" comes close enough to this.)

World socialists never lost sight of this basic requirement. A member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB), writing in the May 1988 *Socialist Standard*, recalled that:

... Dany the Red, the student revolutionary, now says that the way to have overthrown De Gaulle was through elections ... this is not all that much of a U-turn, since, even in May 1968, Cohn-Bendit was well aware that the student movement, despite its revolutionary rhetoric, was in practice struggling not to replace capitalism by socialism but to replace it by some left-wing government ... When he spoke about 'revolutionary action' [in 1968] he did not mean action to overthrow capitalism but merely street demonstrations, seizure of public buildings and strikes to overthrow De Gaulle (ALB, "The French Non-Revolution").

Working from the same premise, a manifesto adopted by the SPGB's Executive Committee in May 1968 had directed some advice to French workers and students:

"We address you not as citizens of one country to citizens of another but as world socialists to fellow members of the world working class.

"We reject frontiers as artificial barriers put up by governments. All men are brothers and the world should be theirs. All men should be social

equals with free access to the plenty that could be if only the means of living belonged to a socialist world community. We oppose governments everywhere, all nationalism, racism and religion, all censorship, all wars and preparations for war.

"Workers! ... Do not be misled by those who say that universal suffrage is a fraud. Learn from your masters. You too must organise to win political power if you want a new society. Do not let cunning politicians or the discredited Communist Party return to power on your backs. Ignore those who would be your leaders. Rely on your own understanding and organisation. Turn universal suffrage into an instrument of emancipation.

"Students! ... A democratic world community, based on common ownership with production for use not profit, can only be set up when people want it and are ready to take the steps needed to get it up and keep it going. Democratic political action is the only way to Socialism. There are no short cuts. We must have a majority actively on our side ... those who praise Bakunin, Trotsky, Mao or Che Guevara ... would use you for their own mistaken ends ... Look at state capitalist Russia where a new privileged class rules, with police intimidation and censorship, over an increasingly restless population. Look at state capitalist China where power-hungry bureaucrats cynically manipulate the people in their own sordid squabbles. Learn the lessons of history: elite action leads to elite rule. No Socialism unless by democratic political action, based on socialist understanding" ("To the workers of France"). (Emphasis added.)

The real limits of revolutionary consciousness became painfully obvious during the student strikes in France in 1986, when the students in high schools and universities moved to keep the reforms that allowed them access to higher education. While this case was possibly an even better illustration of Stratman's argument, it also brought out the unfortunate distancing that had occurred between the generation of '68 and that of '86; after the former had helped secure these reforms, the latter had lapsed into unconsciousness of the struggle to maintain them, acting only when an immediate, concrete threat materialized. "Dany the Red" showed up for a celebrity guest appearance: he had become a German Green Party bureaucrat in full blossom — a sad, but very typical, commentary on the kind of permanence the 1968 "revolution" had enjoyed.

As if to punctuate it with irony, no sooner had the students brought about the capitulation of the French government than a long and inconclusive series of wildcat strikes (very much in the mold of Stratman's remarks on U.S. labor) swept through the national railway system, followed by an equally indecisive wildcat movement among Paris's public transportation workers: so little remained of the mood or the spirit of revolt of '68, and about as much of the actual advance made by the working class against "the totality of capitalist alienation."

What it seems to boil down to, then, is whether people can be "conscious" agents (of revolutionary change) "without knowing it."

Here and there Stratman makes statements about armed revolution that, on the face of it, sound either like "direct action" propaganda or Leninist hoopla. Read in context, however, these do not condemn electoral action as such but disavow it to the extent capital can use it to absorb all opposition to capitalism. In this sense, running for office amounts to running the system — and since the system over which politicians preside is always capitalism, such action is useless for purposes of abolishing it. This means that the first priority is not electing a government but talking to people about how the system undermines their efforts to live fulfilled, fully human lives — treats them as sub-human objects incapable of thinking for themselves — denies them, as world socialists would say, the satisfaction of their real (socially defined) needs. The extent to which Stratman includes the option of insurrection may only reflect an effort to cover all bases. But a revolution lacking any

electoral aspects is an academic pipe-dream.

On a more modest scale, the author reflects on his experiences grappling with Boston's school system during the 70s busing crisis. "The system," he observes, "worked by trapping people between bad choices, neither of which met their aspirations" (p. 25). From this entirely radical datum he draws a startling conclusion:

And then it occurred to me: these people had values and relationships which contradicted the competitive values and dog-eat-dog relationships of capitalism. Their values could only have come from themselves, from shared efforts to make the world different than it was, in the ways they thought possible. What this meant was that these people, and others like them, were already engaged in a struggle to make a different world. A vision of a new world was implicit in their values and relationships. They were already, without knowing it perhaps, working for revolutionary change. (p. 26)

What it seems to boil down to, then, is whether people can be "conscious" agents (of revolutionary change) "without knowing it." Unless this is a radically new way of defining consciousness, it is difficult to see how. Demonstrating an unquelled human resistance to ruling-class propaganda does not in itself signify "working for revolutionary change," and it evinces an over-optimism similar to that of Marx and Engels back in the last century. The only sure way to reach the foothills of the Revolution is to measure all things against their relevance to common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production and distribution — and this means all forms of economic activity. How, you might ask in the above case, did the busing struggle of Boston's working people relate to some scenario based on an education no one needed to pay for, in a world where no one needed to work for a living?

—Ron Elbert

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA and THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

THE WORLD SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

The following companion parties also adhere to the same Object and Declaration of Principles:

WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA, PO Box 1266, North Richmond 3121, Victoria • BUND DEMOKRATISCHER SOZIALISTEN, Gussriegelstrasse 50, A-1100 Vienna, AUSTRIA. JOURNAL: Internationales Freies Wort (\$1) • SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA, PO Box 4280 Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8 • SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. JOURNAL: Socialist Standard (75c) • WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (INDIA), GPO Box 2594, Calcutta 700 001 • WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (IRELAND), Corres. 151 Cavehill Road, Belfast BT15 1BL • WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (NZ), PO Box 1929, Auckland, NI, NEW ZEALAND

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DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that—

- Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
- This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

The companion parties of Socialism, therefore, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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TO THE EDITOR:

I apologize for writing you this letter, but I just have to get it off my chest.

I try to earn a living selling my computer skills (I am "self-employed"), but this is by no means easy. If I choose to wear myself out so I can have money to spend, or pay back money I've borrowed, it's true, I can manage to stay afloat. (Although if the credit card companies — staffed by allegedly "conservative" loan sharks — had understood to whom they were proposing to issue a license to borrow, they might have withdrawn their offers in a hurry.)

Add going back to graduate school to this, and you've already got a horrendous rat race. But in school and in growing up, I developed interests and pursuits (which friends and family all encouraged) that I have since realized there is a snowball's chance in hell anyone is going to pay me for. I can't interest an employer or client in giving me money for doing these things (unless I'm prepared to go in for some of the happy-hour optimism peddled by the stiff-upper-lipppers). So my frivolous "hobbies" sit around in trunks, while I go back to school to see if I can't

up my earnings potential, which would really keep me from doing the things I like.

And even though I enjoy going to graduate school and studying history, they never let me forget someone has to be paying for all this. Ultimately I know this means me. Though I could never expect to get past registration without financial aid, "aid" implies mostly loans, and so, as if to add insult to injury, with no guarantee of work at the end of the tunnel, there goes my life ... (My "life"?)

I realize you don't have any magic formulas or gimmicks to make these troubles go away, but isn't there some way to deal with all this suffocating dreariness?

Attitude Problem

REPLY:

Your attitude is at least a promising start. But you seem to be intensely preoccupied with yourself. Don't you realize this is the lot of most people under capitalism? Why do you think "happy-hour optimism" is such a big industry? Trying to work the system — and beyond that, even trying to make it work for people — is itself part of the problem.

Letters

The only alternative, outside of spiritual retreat into your fantasies (either those you know are in your head or those you project onto an "afterlife"), is to get together with others who, like yourself, acknowledge suffering from a kind of chronic emotional deficit ("immobilism"). What you need is a support group. Join with the socialists to replace this system of society with one that eliminates the conflict between practical and "impractical" pursuits through free access to living resources, and that runs on an all-volunteer work force to boot. No more employment — for anyone.

One thing is for sure. You won't get a life crying in your beer. Become a socialist: even though we don't expect organizing for socialism (common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production) to transform our lives miraculously, it certainly feels right to push for a kind of society where people can develop their interests and abilities to everyone's general satisfaction — not least, to their own.

Of course, no one will pay you for this either. Ø

PRODUCTION FOR USE ONLY*

When I was very young, I overheard the owner of an apple orchard say to a friend, "I'm letting them rot on the trees, it doesn't pay to pick them." ... The year was 1922 ... I was bewildered, all those acres of luscious apples.

In 1929 there was another event that was puzzling. The stock market crashed and some folks lost their fortunes overnight. Some of them solved the problem by jumping out of windows located on the 10th floor.

When I reached the age of 16, or thereabouts, my father sat me down and explained something to me that left me outraged. I found it difficult to believe. He said that he worked eight hours a day, but only got paid for two hours. I found it hard to believe that folks would agree to such an arrangement. I was told that they were unaware of the robbery. They are still unaware of the robbery. Production

has doubled and tripled since then, and in some industries perhaps a hundred-fold, the worker still gets only the bare necessities. I ask you why is this so?

Today, we read about millions of folks dying from starvation because they cannot buy food. They starve when warehouses are bursting at the seams. Why is this so? Apples rot on the tree while folks starve? Why is this so?

Today there are people with extreme wealth. They have private jets, fabulous homes scattered around the world and perhaps a yacht in some secluded cove. Other folks are hunkered under an overpass for the night. Why is this so?

The culprit is the "capitalist system," nothing is produced unless it will sell. Recessions take place because people cannot buy all that is produced.

We must phase out capitalism and introduce socialism. "Production for use" only, free access to our needs.

I do believe you are waiting for George or Harry to make things right. And of course they are waiting for you. It takes very little effort to vote for Socialism. About the same effort that you make when you vote for the same old parties that have had the reins for the past 200 years. The Socialist wants to eliminate capitalism, not reform it. It will take a majority of socialists to accomplish the task.

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What's in a revolution?

Thomas S. Kuhn defines "scientific revolutions" as "those non-cumulative developmental episodes in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one" (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 92). But what does David Stratman mean by "revolution"? Like many people, he seems to regard the general definition as self-evident or at any rate fairly obvious; however, he does not use it in the same way when he defines "democratic revolution" as when he speaks of "revolutions" in general. While acknowledging that "'Revolution' has historically meant different things to different people" (p. 2), he later simply incorporates references to what have been called "revolutions" as though those differing usages were all theoretically valid.

He states that "what we mean by 'revolution' ... depends largely on our view of people. Democratic revolu-

tion and truly democratic society can only be based on a view of ordinary people as fit to rule society" (p. 2). Despite Stratman's protests, this is exactly the point of departure of world socialism; his "new paradigm" is at least to that extent compatible with the socialist point of view. "Revolution," he says, "in my view, does not mean simply a new economic structure, and it does not mean control by a new elite. It means transforming all the relationships in society to accord with the values, goals and idea of human life of ordinary working people" (p. 3). Yet going by such a definition (and certainly going by ours), the movements of the 60s he describes in Chapter 5 — in France, China and the U.S. civil rights movement — were not revolutionary, since they did not result in a change in the basis of society. What accounts for the discrepancy?

The explanation lies in the context of his definition: "I believe," he says that the basis for a truly democratic society can be found in the values and relationships of ordinary working people... The people who do the productive labor of society... have goals and values which fundamentally conflict with the goals and values of the class of people who control the society and reap the rewards of this labor" (p. 2). The very nature of concrete activity expresses or conceals a revolutionary content; working people are constantly struggling to establish and extend human values and attitudes, and this is revolutionary *vis-a-vis* the system of social control we call capitalism.

Stratman's assumption is thus that the specific actions of working people define the unit of theory: revolution is not defined on a general, abstract scale but concretely. He tends to see revolution in people's struggle to impose human values. Because this struggle creates its own system of abstractions (which, believe it or not, is a very historical materialist thing to say), existing general configurations corresponding to one instance or another of capitalist development are all part of the reactionary system of controls governed by the elite (capitalist class). In both of his examples on page two of what "'revolution' has historically meant" (the American Revolution, the October Revolution), he reiterates the idea that the popular impulse to revolution was used by the elite to its advantage, then ruthlessly neutralized (repressed). And so with his examples of "revolutions" during the 60s, where he describes the same impulse, but with a finer optic. Here, too, the revolutionary impulse of real people was squashed.

Socialists define revolution a bit differently. Because we take the economic dimension of human social life into account (as the initiating part of the social cycle), we do

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